

# *News Clippings*

## *December 11, 2008*

### **Emergency Response**

#### **Evansville**

Evansville Firefighters Train with Indiana's Only High-Tech Unit

[Read the Article](#)

#### **Ft. Wayne**

Nothing's left to chance aboard a medical helicopter.

[Read the Article](#)

#### **Indianapolis**

Indiana Homeland Security Director Praises Choice of Napolitano

[Read the Article](#)

#### **Indianapolis**

State Receives New Disaster Relief Funds

[Read the Article](#)

#### **Logansport**

Under one roof: County, city dispatchers look forward to combined operation

[Read the Article](#)

### **Fire**

#### **Elrod**

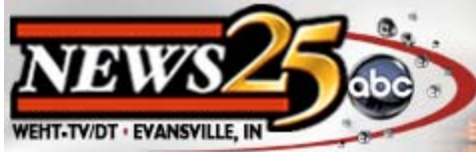
2 bodies found after house fire in Elrod

[Read the Article](#)

#### **Indianapolis**

Alternative Heating Sources, House Fires On The Rise

[Read the Article](#)



ALWAYS TRACKING

ALWAYS WATCHING

ALWAYS ALERTING

**Evansville Firefighters Train with Indiana's Only High-Tech Unit**  
December 6, 2008

story by: [Courtney Fischer](#)

EVANSVILLE - More than 30 tri-state firefighters worked to put out a fire today. No one was hurt-it was a lesson in emergency training.

The state's only fire training truck is in town to help teach firefighters in a new hi-tech way.



John Buckman, chief of Indiana's Firefighting Training Association said this training is the "new and improved" way to learn how to fight fires.

"This is the new way, [the] new method of doing safe fire fighter training in a realistic fire situation," John Buckman said.

The truck trains 350 of Indiana's 26,000 firefighters per month, however Buckman said not every firefighter in Indiana will get to use this truck.

"You can see it's going to take us a long time to get throughout the state," Buckman said.

There's only one mobile fire-training unit in the state of Indiana. Firefighters say the training is priceless.

It will cost \$500,000 more to get another unit. The Indiana Department of Homeland Security is responsible for the financing of another truck.

Buckman says that extra truck could help more rural departments.

"They may not see fire but once or twice a year. Well, here's the opportunity for them to see fires four or five times in one day," Buckman said.

A second truck could also mean a longer lifespan for the current truck firefighters are using now.

"It's not designed to be moved everyday because of the computers and technology on board. It just gets beat to death by moving it everyday," Buckman said.

The Firefighter Training Association will know by the end of January if it will get the funds for another truck. It could be another eight months before it arrives.

## **Fort Wayne's Parkview Samaritan flying ambulance turns 19**

**Nothing's left to chance aboard a medical helicopter.**

The wind is cutting. Icy fingers bite bare skin in the gaps between wrist and glove, scarf and neck. Four stories off the ground, three blue-clad figures hover around the dragonfly shape of the Parkview Hospital Samaritan medical helicopter.

The crew is carrying out a routine inspection as their shift begins at 6 a.m. If anything looks, sounds or feels wrong, it will be relayed to two mechanics, whose troll-like office is tucked under the helipad. Inspection complete, the crew — pilot Brad Wilson, paramedic Ken Strong and registered nurse Sue Markey - head for the Parkview cafeteria for breakfast.

With two helicopters in its fleet, one in Fort Wayne and the other in Rochester, the Parkview Samaritan program recently celebrated its 19th year.

"I was impressed with the commitment Parkview has had to the trauma services," said Markey, who has been with the program for 18 years. "They were really excited and committed to what they were doing ... . It turned out to be a very good place to work."**Working conditions**

Markey and Strong work a 12-hour shift, three days in a row. Then its off for three days and the shift swings to night for three days. Markey looks tired but she smiles as she said, "After all these years, I like flying both (day and night shifts)."

Wilson, one of three pilots in the program, works four days on and four days off, also 12-hour shifts. He too swings from days to nights after four days.

By Federal Aviation Administration regulation, pilots cannot fly more than 14 hours in a row, which is why their shifts are 12 hours. In addition, the Parkview Samaritan program has a rule you cannot work another job and then come to work on the helicopter.

The crew thinks it's a fair rule.

"We have a very high-risk job," Wilson said. "You don't want someone who has been up for 20 hours working on you."**The helicopter**

The Samaritan program flies a Dauphin, considered one of the safest helicopters in the business. Built by Aerospatiale, the same company that makes the Concorde Jet, its two engines, auto instrument control and fuel capacity make it one of the safest birds out there. The U.S. Coast Guard uses the same \$5 million helicopter.

Parkview leases two through Air Methods Corp. of Englewood, Colo. According to the company's Web site ( [www.airmethods.com](http://www.airmethods.com)), it is the nation's largest provider of air medical emergency transport services, with 314 helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft at 254 bases in 42 states. The pilots, mechanics and the insurance on the helicopters are all covered under the lease agreement.**Safety regulations**

Maintaining safe working conditions is very important to the crew. Wilson is concerned with the rapid growth of medical helicopter usage in Indiana.

"The whole state has tripled or quadrupled in the past three years," he said.

Currently, Indiana does not limit the number of medical helicopters that can operate in the state.

Indiana has licensed 13 air ambulance services to operate in the state, and also has licensed seven more services based in Illinois, Ohio and Kentucky to serve portions of Indiana.

These services are regulated by two systems: FAA regulations, which regulate the pilots, mechanics and the helicopters; and the Indiana Department of Homeland Security, which covers the medical licensing.

The Indiana Emergency Medical Services Commission sets the guidelines for the licenses, and every two years providers reapply for a license, said John Erickson, spokesman for Indiana Homeland Security department.

The commission has strict rules concerning everything from equipment to the number of personnel and the communication links with medical and emergency personnel, Erickson said. Failing to meet any of the criteria can get a license revoked.

Regulations are designed to prevent accidents.

In June, for example, two medical helicopters collided mid-air killing six people near Flagstaff, Ariz.. According to a USA Today newspaper story, the collision of the two medical helicopters was the first in the history of the National Transportation Safety Board. The story also reported the helicopters were not speaking to air traffic control at the time of the crash.**Collaborating with the local competition**

Fort Wayne currently has two competing medical helicopters, Samaritan and nearly 5-year-old Lutheran Air from Lutheran Hospital. They work together to ensure flight safety.

Former Lutheran Air Director Kevin Wellman said, "We are here primarily to serve our health-care network, and secondly to act as a backup for Samaritan."

Lutheran and Parkview meet monthly to review how calls were handled. They have a special pilots' channel that both crews can use to communicate with each other. In addition, air traffic control at Fort Wayne International airport keeps an eye on both

helicopters.

“We are not unfriendly to each other,” Markey said. “We try to work with each other for safety. You have to talk to each other constantly, in the air and on the ground, for safety,” she added.

The Allen County Dispatch has divided the county between the two services so that both respond to whatever is closer - and both deliver patients to the hospital that best serves the needs of the patient.

Parkview, on Randallia Drive, is the only American College of Surgeons-verified trauma center in the area. So if the Lutheran helicopter crew picked up someone in need of acute care, they would take the person to Parkview, even if Lutheran Hospital is closer.

By the same token, if Samaritan picked up a burn victim, the helicopter crew would take the person to St. Joseph Hospital because they have the only burn-care unit in northeast Indiana.**In the air**

On a recent day, that's exactly what happens.

The call came in mid-morning inside the crew's office space, a floor above and adjacent to the helicopter pad. No elevator means a quick run down a flight of stairs. Within minutes they are in the air headed for a factory in Bluffton, where a burn victim awaits them.

Headsets allow conversation to be heard over the engine noise, but the chatter is kept to a minimum as patient updates and air traffic control instructions are broadcast to the helicopter.

When a medical helicopter takes flight, it receives priority from air traffic control, but the crew still watches for possible flight hazards. When arriving at the scene, they rely on local emergency responders to mark the landing zone and to alert them to any obstacles nearby.

As the chopper closes in on its destination, the crew is glued to the windows, looking for any hazards in their flight path. Flares mark the scene, and the pilot touches down without a problem.

Markey and Strong hop out to assess the patient. If they need to stabilize him further, the pilot will shut down the engines to conserve fuel. If they can load the patient right away, the engines will stay running.

This patient is stable enough to transport. So, with the help of the emergency personnel on the scene, the victim is loaded into the bird.

The destination is St Joseph Hospital. On the flight there, paramedic Ken Strong sits at the patient's head with a respirator bag he might need, talking with the patient and

constantly assessing his condition. Markey figures out the dosage of painkiller and administers it to the patient.

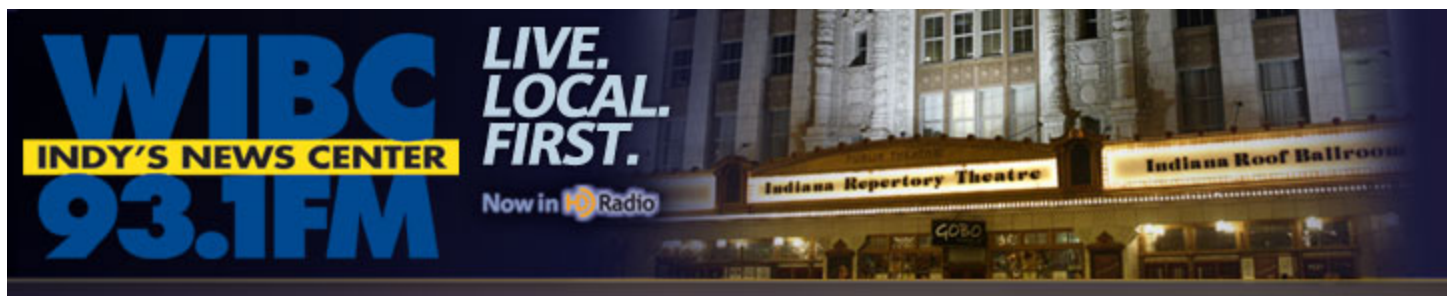
Flying at 205 miles per hour, it's only minutes before Samaritan lands on the St Joseph Hospital helipad.

The flight crew and the waiting burn team quickly unload the patient. Markey and Strong follow them inside, giving an update on the status of the patient.

Soon they are belted in Samaritan and headed back to Parkview. Upon their return, they will have about two hours' worth of paper work to file on the run.

Back on the Parkview helipad, the mood is lighter. Their patient is safe at St Joseph Hospital, and their thoughts are on lunch.

Strong smiled. "It's hot brownie Wednesday!" he announced.



## **Indiana Homeland Security Director Praises Choice of Napolitano**

By Reed Parker

12/2/2008

Indiana's new Homeland Security Director likes President-elect Obama's pick for Homeland Security Director.

Joe Wainscott told Steve Simpson on Indianapolis Tonight Monday that Janet Napolitano's background will be good for the country and Indiana.

Wainscott says the key to public safety is to have a good relationship and cooperation with the homeland security department, especially FEMA. He adds Indiana may not be a major terrorist target, but there are areas in the state that are closely watched.

Wainscott says given recent events in India and other places, Indiana must remain vigilant in protecting its residents.





## State Receives New Disaster Relief Funds

*InsideIndianaBusiness.com Report*

**The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development has released another \$95 million to assist long-term disaster recovery efforts in Indiana. The state received \$67 million in September to help communities and businesses recover from June storms and flooding. The funds will be distributed through the Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs.**

Indianapolis, Ind. -- Governor Mitch Daniels today announced that Indiana will receive an additional \$95 million in federal funding to help with long-term disaster recovery efforts for damage caused by federally declared natural disasters in 2008.

“Though we’ve had more than our fair share of severe weather and flooding over the past year, we will not let up in our efforts to help Indiana communities get back on track,” said Daniels. “Indiana has always been a state where neighbors help neighbors, but if we can help supplement that assistance with some additional federal dollars, we’ll absolutely do that.”

The funding is provided through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development’s (HUD) Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG) and represents a portion of the supplemental funding Congress appropriated in September for emergency disaster assistance in states affected by severe storms and flooding in 2008. The new funding can be used by the state for long-term recovery efforts for damage caused by any previous natural disaster which received a federal declaration this year. It is in addition to the \$67 million the state was allocated in September that can be used exclusively for recovery efforts from damage caused by June storms and flooding.

The funds will be distributed through the Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs (OCRA). A specific plan for use of the \$95 million will be outlined by OCRA in the coming weeks and will likely focus on unmet housing needs, including home buy-outs and aiding in low cost housing development as well as infrastructure revitalization projects not covered by other federal funds.

Per HUD’s protocol for distributing funds, a final plan outlining proposed state use of the first \$67 million the state was allocated in September will be issued for public comment tomorrow and then submitted to HUD for final approval. Once the plan is approved, communities and other qualifying organizations may apply for funding through OCRA and the Indiana Department of Homeland Security. The plan will focus on offsetting the local match requirements for communities participating in the Federal Emergency Management Agency’s (FEMA) Public Assistance program and supplementing the funding available for communities to purchase homes through FEMA’s Hazard Mitigation Program.

Information on how communities and qualifying organizations can apply for funding will be released when details are finalized.

Source: Office of Governor Mitch Daniels



**[December 07, 2008]**

## **Under one roof: County, city dispatchers look forward to combined operation**

Dec 07, 2008 (Pharos-Tribune - McClatchy-Tribune Information Services via COMTEX) -- Brian Sherrill is looking forward to the opening of the new city-county communications center in Cass County.

Sherrill, who now works in the county dispatch center at the county jail, said the new facility would be a lot more comfortable.

"We will have a safer working environment to take care of people without distractions," he said. "There is more space for equipment than what we have right now and hopefully down the road it will pave the way for a regional backup center."

The new facility at the Cass County government annex at 520 High St. will begin operations on Jan. 1. It will have six dispatch stations, twice the number in the county's current facility, and Sherrill said that could be crucial in a major emergency.

Lori Forrer, director of the the center, said combining city and county operations would improve the efficiency of emergency response.

"The biggest change is that there will be no more transfers of calls from the county to the city," Forrer said. "All the calls will be coming in to one center."

Any time an operator has to transfer a call, there's always a chance of losing it, she said. "Dropping calls is the biggest risk we face, and we're not going to have to deal with that now," she said. "This is the greatest thing Cass County could have done."

Fitting of the new center's electrical and computer connections is now finished, and the center is on schedule to be operational by the end of the month. The new computer equipment was scheduled to be installed by the end last week, with testing set for early this week.

Jill Swanson, now a city dispatcher, has also worked for the county. She said she had been nervous about the changes but now sees the combined operation as a good move.

"It will be different, but I think it will be fine once all the kinks are worked out," she said. Forrer said training would be provided for operators to help them adjust to the new equipment and also so they're familiar with both city and county streets.

"We're going to be doing company-aided dispatch training, and some mapping training, which will take place on Dec. 16 or 18," Forrer said. "There will also be some minimal radio training on some upgrades. Internal training will take up most of it. Cass County operators are experts on the county and the city operators are experts on the city. We are going to need teamwork so the county helps the city and the city helps the county. We'll definitely be working to promote a team-building environment."

Forrer said she would also be open to establishing a regional emergency response center. "We have been talking about it, and we would be open to the idea," Forrer said. "With the new center, we have the technology there and we have the capability to do it."

She added that other counties in the region were also looking to combine their dispatch centers as a way of saving money.

"Tippecanoe is going through the process of combining their city and county dispatch, and White and Miami counties have already been consolidated for two years," Forrer said. "I think you're going to see a lot of it in the future."

The center also includes space for an emergency operations center during an emergency such as a tornado or the floods experienced this year.

Alvin Beckman, the county's emergency management director, said that if an emergency situation were to occur, the operation would benefit from improved access to equipment.

"Right now if we had an emergency situation in the county, we utilize my office as the operations center," Beckman said. "In the new center, we'll have it where people can come in and each individual entity can have a phone and computer in front of them. Currently, we don't have the capability for computer hookups so we have to use laptops and also don't always have the capability to hook up phones. We will have this in the new emergency operations center."

Funding for the emergency operations center has come from a grant from the Indiana Department of Homeland Security. In addition to better access to computers, the new center will have an interactive whiteboard for use during emergency situations.

"We will be able to put the county map up on the screen and see the entire area," Beckman said. "As the event plays out, everyone in the EOC can see what is going on."

Forrer said having the EOC and emergency dispatch services working next to each other would greatly improve communication.

"I think whenever you can get an EOC right next to emergency dispatch center you're going to have a communication center," Forrer said. "There is going to be no lost information because it is all under one roof. In the past when there has been an issue, someone has been running back and forth or on the phone relaying information. We're not going to have this now. We will be able to step next door and talk directly, face to face. And when the EOC is not using the room it will be a wonderful training facility."

Beckman agreed, praising the positive impact the combined dispatch is going to have on the area. "The new dispatch center is a tremendous plus for the community and is going to be a great benefit to Cass County," he said.

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December 7, 2008

## 2 bodies found after house fire in Elrod

*Associated Press*

ELROD, Ind. — State police say a house fire in the southeastern Indiana town of Elrod killed two people.

Milan firefighters responded to the fire shortly before 7 a.m. today and put out the blaze in about an hour. The bodies were found after the fire was out. Firefighters believe the fire had been burning for some time before it was reported.

The victims weren't immediately identified. Autopsies were scheduled for Monday at Dearborn County Hospital in Lawrenceburg.

Investigators think the fire started at or near a wood furnace in the basement where combustible materials were stored nearby.

Elrod is about 35 miles west of Cincinnati.

## Alternative Heating Sources, House Fires On The Rise

As temperatures fall and natural gas prices rise, many are starting to consider alternative ways to heat their home this winter. The Indiana Department of Homeland Security and the Indiana State Fire Marshal Jim Greeson warns that using alternative heating sources could be dangerous.

IDHS suggests following these tips for safe heating during the winter months:

- Maintain a 3 feet separation between things that can burn and heating equipment. This includes draperies, blankets, clothing, bedding, etc.
- When buying a new space heater, make sure it carries the mark of an independent testing laboratory and is legal for use in your community.
- Install your stationary space
- Plug your electric-powered space heater into an outlet with sufficient capacity and never into an extension cord.
- Use the proper grade of fuel for your liquid-fueled space heater, and never use gasoline in any heater not approved for gasoline use. Refuel only in a well-ventilated area and when the equipment is cool.
- Use only dry, seasoned wood in a fireplace or wood stove to avoid the build-up of creosote, an oily deposit that easily catches fire and accounts for most chimney fires and the largest share of home heating fires. Use only paper or kindling wood, not a flammable liquid, to start the fire. Do not use artificial logs in wood stoves.
- Make sure your fireplace has a sturdy screen to prevent sparks from flying into the room. Allow fireplace and woodstove ashes to cool before disposing in a metal container, which is kept a safe distance from your home.
- Turn off space heaters whenever the room they are in is unoccupied or under circumstances when manufacturer's instructions say they should be turned off. Portable space heaters are so easy to knock over in the dark that they should be turned off when you go to bed.
- Do not use your oven to heat your home.
- Make sure fuel-burning equipment is vented to the outside, that the venting is kept clear and unobstructed, and that the exit point is properly sealed around the vent. These steps are to make sure deadly carbon monoxide does not build up in the home.
- Inspect all heating equipment annually, and clean as necessary